

In the Matter of \_\_\_\_\_ )  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )  
 Fourth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking  
 for the Creation of a Low Power Radio Service  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Future of Music Coalition (FMC) commends the FCC for its continuing attention in implementing the Local Community Radio Act (LCRA). As an organization dedicated to improving conditions for musicians, we are primarily concerned with the LCRA's impact on providing new Low Power FM (LPFM) opportunities through which local musicians and community members can have expanded access to the public airwaves in more towns and cities across America. The need to establish a LPFM service is real. Due to the widespread consolidation in radio station ownership on the commercial dial, there are fewer platforms for diverse, original and, most importantly, community-centric programming on the airwaves. The LCRA attempts to restore radio as a practical and accessible platform for the public, specifically by expanding opportunities for local radio. In its *Fourth Further Notice*, the FCC sought guidance on certain technical aspects of LCRA implementation that would help create more LPFM opportunities in a forthcoming application window. We fully support the promulgation of rules that allow for an increased number of LPFM stations as well as more diverse, original programming at those stations. Additionally, we assert that careful attention should be paid to how these stations are utilized, and whether they are helping to foster local culture and community engagement. From our perspective, this goal is at the heart of the Commission's own work around LPFM — from the initial conception of how to best utilize these frequencies to provide true local radio to the present *Notice*. Beyond technical considerations that we will not address, we strongly recommend that provisions to enable and support local programming be clearly reflected in LPFM rules implementation and filing window procedures, as along with other concerns outlined below. We again thank the

Commission for its valuable work on LPFM now and over the past decade, and look forward to hearing more truly local stations in the near future.

## **II. SECOND ADJACENT CHANNEL DISTANCE SEPARATION REQUIREMENTS**

LPFM stations should be able to operate two clicks away from other stations on the dial, instead of three. In jurisdictions where the radio market is already crowded, opportunities for new LPFM stations will remain scant — or even non-existent — if requirements remain that require stations to be three clicks away from each other. We support the FCC in recognizing this and pursuing rule changes in concert with section 3(b)(2)(A) of the LCRA.

## **III. LPFM WATTAGE**

Currently, LPFM stations operate at 100 watts. Depending on the jurisdiction, it may be that LPFM stations should be able to operate at both higher and lower wattages. In areas where the airwaves are less crowded, we see no reason that LPFMs should not be able to operate at higher wattages in order to reach more listeners. This would be particularly useful in rural areas where community members may be more spread out. In such instances, a 200-watt LPFM could provide appreciable cultural, civic and public safety benefits to a broader — but still local — community base. In larger cities, like New York or Los Angeles, where the thought of a 100-watt LPFM is technologically inconceivable, a 10-watt LPFM station could provide community engagement at the hyper-local level.

The FCC should promulgate rules that allow different communities to take advantage of the LPFM opportunities that are feasible within their particular technological constraints. As FMC has reiterated in numerous filings with the Commission, the effect of consolidation in the overall radio marketplace has had a deleterious affect on the amount of diverse, original programming heard on radio. Allowing for LPFMs to operate at wattages both above and below 100 will help fulfill the mission of the LCRA, while enhancing local programming and ownership diversity.

#### **IV. LOCAL PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENT**

At the moment, LPFM applications will receive a special point, in terms of preference, if they declare that the proposed station will originate at least 8 hours of local programming a day. We believe that the FCC should explore ways to ensure that all LPFM stations will commit to some amount of local programming during their broadcast hours. LPFM stations are necessarily community-based entities and their content should therefore reflect the unique expression and perspectives of the communities that they serve.

Without at least some local programming daily than there is no way to guarantee that diverse, original voices are making their way onto the radio. This would be contrary to the spirit of the LCRA, and the work of the many committed LPFM advocates who sought tirelessly to help lay the groundwork for this crucial policy. FMC believes that, while there are many ways to improve conditions in radio, it is of utmost importance to honor the true community aspects of LPFM. Locally-originated programming via LPFM offers opportunities for a range of voices rarely heard on area broadcast stations.

Alongside other noncommercial (and some commercial) broadcasters, LPFM can enhance and invigorate a radio landscape blighted by consolidation and the failing business models such policies perpetuate. We have long held that more unique voices on the airwaves bolsters communities as well as the radio industry in general, and support the clear outlining of local programming requirements within the rulemaking and application procedure.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

FMC would like to thank the FCC for the opportunity to comment on its *Fourth Further Notice*. The LCRA should be implemented in such a way that provides as many opportunities for diverse, original voices on LPFM stations as is technologically feasible. The overly-consolidated radio marketplace continues to diminish the core strengths of a uniquely relevant American medium. The FCC can help reinvigorate radio by crafting rules that engender more opportunities for diverse, original voices to reach the airwaves. We believe that this *Notice* is another positive step to achieving this worthy and important goal.